

The Needs of the Disabled Children Character in the Novel '*Rahsia Dhia!*' by Zainun Mustapha

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Abstract

This paper was produced to discuss the needs of a disabled child character in the children's novel *Rahsia Dhia*. This novel won the 2014 Malaysia Premier Literary Prize in the Children and Youth category. The novel is based on the understanding that every human being has wants and needs to achieve in life. Likewise, Persons with Disabilities (OKU). In general, disabled children also have the same wishes as other normal children. Through this paper, the researcher analyzed children's literature, especially children's novels that highlight the wishes of disabled children. In addition, this study used a qualitative method, which was a text analysis. The Hierarchy of Human Needs Theory (Abraham Maslow) would be applied in this study. The results found that disabled children had the same psychological needs as other normal children, namely physiological needs, safety, love, self-esteem, and self-improvement.

Keywords: Needs, Psychology, Children, Disabled, Hierarchy of Human Needs, Malaysia Premier Literary Prize

Introduction

In general, a need is something that humans want and it is often in a beautiful form. Needs are also sometimes impossible to achieve if not accompanied by efforts and dreams. This will give temporary and impermanent satisfaction. A child is someone who is under the age of 18 as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children's Act, 2001.

People with Disabilities or also called special people and groups with special needs are part of society. According to the Disabled Persons Act (2008), the definition of a Disabled Person is a person with a long-term disability in terms of physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory who when faced with various obstacles may not be able to engage fully and effectively in society. Next, according to Ujang et al (2013), disability is a condition that is considered to reduce a person's function or ability when compared to a normal human being.

In general, the novel is one of the most important genres of Modern Malay Literature compared to other genres. The genre of the novel existed before the Second World War and developed into the 21st century. A novel is a literary work that talks about the upheaval in the life of the community, including the disabled community. According to Ahmad (1989), the novel is a social documentation that depicts the community's struggle in life and the conflict between justice and injustice. People with disabilities are part of society. Therefore, their struggle to fulfill their wishes to continue their life becomes the essence of a novel. The development of novels that revolve around people with disabilities (OKU) appeared in the 1970s. This is proven through the works of novelists such as Rahman Haji Yusuf in the novel *Warna-Warna*, uplifting the marginalized society, namely a person with a brain disability. Challenges and obstacles that they had to go through to fulfill their wishes in life. Among other novelists who make disabled people the main characters in their works are Norhashimah Hashim, Ramlah Abd. Rashid, Rejab F.I, Maaruf Mahmud and many others.

Additionally, some novelists take the disabled teenager as the main character and in the literature component (Komsas) text. For example, Abang Saifuddin Abang Bohari in the novel *Di Sebalik Wajah*, portrays the character of a disabled teenager, Fikri, a child with albinism. This novel is the Komsas text for Form 2 students. Next, the novel *Azfa Hanani* is also a Komsas text by Halis Azhan. It has a character of a disabled person, Zuraini, a paralyzed teenager who works hard to fulfill her psychological needs to succeed in life. This shows that all people want to meet their psychological needs, including the disabled. As stated by Sulaiman (2008), not only do normal people have hope, the disabled people also have the same hopes, ambitions, and dreams similar to normal people. They also want to have a bright future like everyone else. This includes the desire to work like everyone else. This statement mentions that people with disabilities have the needs and wishes as well as the same psychological needs and wants as other normal people.

Based on the researcher's observations on the historical development of novels in Malaysia that feature disabled characters, the researcher sees a lack of novelists that make disabled children the main character. The novelists emphasize more on adult and teenage characters. For example, the novel *Anak Din Biola*, by Mahmud (1993) has a supporting character, Pak Wan Busu, who is described as visually impaired.

Next, based on previous studies, the researcher found no specific study related to the psychological needs of disabled children. Most studies only focus on normal adolescent and adult characters. For example, studies conducted by Bakar et al (2016); Hashim (2015); Hanafiah (2014) and Halis Azhan Mohd, Hanafiah (2002) looked at teenage character needs instead of disabled teens.

Accordingly, this study needs to be done to see the needs of disabled children in literary works. Therefore, the researcher has chosen the children's novel '*Rahsia Dhia!*' by Mustapa (2014) as a research text that looks at disabled children's character needs. This novel is the winner of the 2014 Malaysia Premier Literature Prize in the Children's and Youth Literature category.

This novel tells a story of a child named Dhia. Dhia is a Year 5 student who has been missing five fingers since birth. Dhia is also a diligent and clever student and is loved by her parents. Her father had passed away. In the month of independence, her school organized a design competition themed 'Love for the Nation'. Dhia worked diligently to collect discarded materials such as flags of various sizes that were no longer used. After it was completed, a friend was jealous because she was afraid that Dhia's invention would win, so it was sabotaged. The damage does not dampen her spirit. Dhia fixes it by getting help from friends who sympathize with her. In a competition, Dhia's design won a prize. The students who sabotaged her were caught and they apologized. Dhia does not hold a grudge and forgives them.

Objective

- Classifying the needs of the disabled children character in the novel '*Rahsia Dhia!*'
- Analyzing the needs of disabled children in the novel '*Rahsia Dhia!*' based on Abraham Maslow's Humanistic theory

Methodology

In this study, the researcher has chosen to use a qualitative research method. Bogdan and Taylor in Moleong (2004:04) define qualitative methods as research procedures that produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people who behave and their behavior. Therefore, in this study, the research design used is bibliography, text analysis, and Abraham Maslow's Humanistic theory.

Next, the researcher uses the Humanistic theory of (Maslow, 1970). Abraham Maslow's Humanistic Theory is used to see people as good and noble who have a natural tendency to achieve self-actualization. According to him, humans have natural needs that exist within themselves in a hierarchy that has its own priorities. In his book, *Motivation and Personality* (1970:35-47), Maslow explained that human needs are divided into five main levels, namely physiological, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization.

According to Maslow (1970), physiological needs are the basic needs in this theory. Maslow emphasized that this level must be fulfilled first before fulfilling other needs. This proves that humans need some basic things to continue survival such as food, drink, shelter, and clothing. Clearly, humans need to fulfill all the physiological needs as outlined by Maslow before moving to the next level.

The second level is the need for security. Humans need a guarantee of safety to continue survival. The forms of security that people need at this stage are physical security, political stability, economy, getting legal protection, freedom of speech, not being in fear, as well as worry and feeling uncertain. In fact, human needs to ensure that they are in a secure, stable, consistent, and safe environment. The safety aspect also includes mental and spiritual safety. A sense of worry and fear will result in people feeling stressed and often exhibiting negative attitudes. As a result, it is difficult for them to move to achieve their goals at the next level.

The third level is the need for love. Maslow (1970) stated that in fulfilling the need for love, humans need relationships with other humans such as family members, friends, society, and

so on. In addition, people also want to be accepted by their families and communities. To be accepted by the family and society, people will work hard to achieve that desired goal which involves the acceptance of the people around them.

Next, after reaching this level, humans will go to the next level which is the self-esteem needs. At this level, every human wants to be appreciated for all the achievements or activities they did.

Accordingly, Abraham Maslow's humanistic theory is able to explain the needs and wants of society. People with disabilities also have wants and needs that must be met in order to survive. A person who needs for self-esteem also has other needs such as physiology, security, affection, as well as loving and being loved.

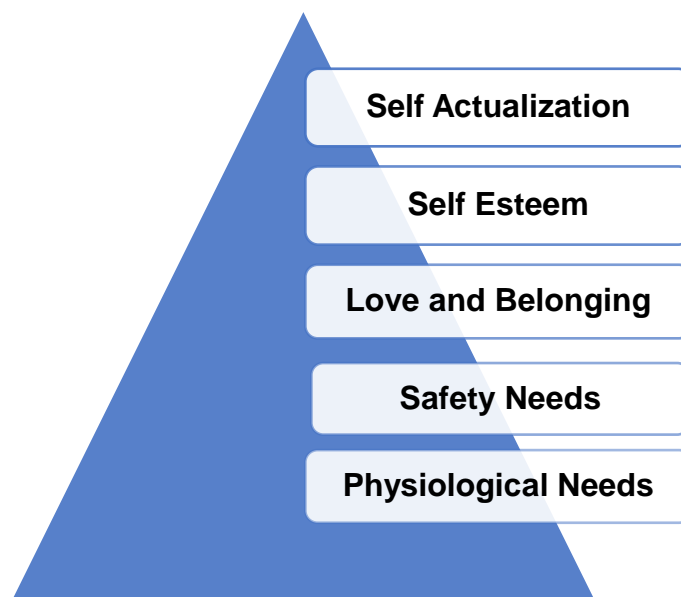


Figure 1 The Hierarchy of Human Needs Theory (Abraham Maslow)

Research Analysis

This discussion will focus on disabled children's character needs, namely physiological needs, safety needs, love, and self-esteem. The table below explains the analysis of the disabled children's character needs in the novel '*Rahsia Dhia!*' by (Mustapha, 2014).

Table 1

Analysis of Children with Disabilities Character's Desires in the Novel 'Rahsia Dhia!'

The needs of disabled Children character	The explanation
Physiological	The character Dhia has basic physiological needs such as eating, drinking, and shelter for survival.
Safety assurance	The character Dhia is described as needing education as a guarantee of security for the future.
Love and belonging	The character Dhia needs love and attention from family, peers, and the surrounding community.
Self-esteem	The need at this level is that Dhia wants to see children with disabilities succeed in life and not be dependent on others and Dhia wants to make her success in winning the competition be appreciated by the community.
Self-actualization	At this stage, Dhia wants to succeed in life.

Fulfilling the Physiological Needs

Physiology is a science related to natural human actions and behavior. According to Rogers (1978), physiology is a science related to human behavior or character that occurs naturally from within. Whereas Deany (1989) said, physiology is the science of human behavior that manifested from when they are born. According to him, this knowledge is related to daily behavior such as eating and sleeping. Basic needs such as the need to eat, drink, and shelter must be met first before a person reaches the level of self-actualization. Based on Abraham Maslow's Theory of Human Needs, an individual has physiological needs which are the basic needs of a person to live. For example, food, drink, accommodation, education, and so on.

In the novel '*Rahsia Dhia!*' the need for home belongs to physiological needs. Just like other normal children, Dhia also needs a place to live to meet their basic needs to continue to survive. An example of physiological needs can be seen through the following quote.

It is not much of a house. Just a simple house. A narrow house that was built by her late father before he died.

(*Dhia!*, 2014:60)

Based on the quote, it can be explained that Dhia's late father had prepared a house for Dhia as a place to take shelter. Dhia's physiological needs in the first stage were met by her late father.

Security Needs

Humans need a stable and safe environment, and so do disabled children. The second level in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is safety needs. Every child wants to always be protected and get a guarantee of safety from the people around them, especially the family. Safety

assurance, job stability, community care, law, and freeing oneself from external and internal threats are aspects of safety that everyone needs, especially disabled children.

In the novel '*Rahsia Dhia!*' the security Dhia needs is to get an education to secure her future. Children's education is a responsibility that must be given serious attention and a great sacrifice because the future of children depends on the way they are educated, guided, and shaped by their parents. The educational stability that is imparted will also make them useful people for the family, community, and country (Hamid et al., 2010:235). Thus, like other children, Dhia also needs an education to guarantee a better life. In this novel, the author clearly stated that Dhia received a formal education at school. This can be seen through the following quote.

Puan Dalilah had to take a job sewing clothes to make her extra income. With that skill, Puan Dalilah tries to save some money every month. She needs to save money for Dhia's needs. The child will certainly need bigger expenses when she goes into higher education. After her husband returned to God, their lives felt so difficult. However, Puan Dalilah is aware that she cannot give up hope. They must continue their lives even without her husbands by their side.

(*Dhia!*, 2014:46)

Based on the quote below, Dhia's educational needs are met by her mother who tries to get the best education for her daughter. Puan Dalilah tried to get some money by sewing clothes to increase her income to finance Dhia's schooling. Dalilah also saved some of the money in preparation for Dhia to continue her studies at the higher education level. This is in line with Mohamed (2005), who stated that disabled children feel comfortable, safe, and guarded to receive education and it is vital to create continuity in the environment to enable children to give meaning to the world around them and form a concept of their place. This statement clearly shows that disabled children also deserve the best education for their future.

Needs for Love

Love is the most important element for a harmonious family institution. Love is necessary for the survival of every family member. This is because the feeling of wanting to love and be loved is a natural human nature. In general, love for fellow human beings is highly demanded, especially for brothers and sisters of the same religion. Love that is built based on love for Allah SWT and His Messenger. Feelings of affection and love cause an individual to care more about others than himself.

The feeling of love will also cause a person to try to protect himself, his family, and the community from disaster or catastrophe in this world and hellfire in the afterlife. This is in accordance with the warning of Allah SWT, quoted from Mat (2007:37-38) in surah al-Tahrim verse 6, which means

“Believers, guard yourselves and your kindred against a Fire whose fuel is human beings and stones (idols), a Fire held in the charge of fierce and stern angels who never disobey what He has commanded them, and always do what they are bidden.”
(Surah al-Tahrim: verse 6)

According to Maslow (1970), humans need relationships with other humans. Everyone wants to love and be loved. Therefore, human needs love from family, friends, and society. The need for love is clearly displayed in the novel '*Rahsia Dhia!*'. Although Dhia was born with a disability, Mrs. Dalilah loved her daughter. Puan Dalilah gives her full love to her daughter. This makes Dhia not feel the slightest bit of her disability. Her mother always gave her encouragement to not give up quickly and never consider her disability as an obstacle to success.

Puan Dalilah nodded while tenderly caressing the head of her beloved daughter. Staring at that face. How she loved her daughter.

(*Dhia!*, 2014:10)

This is in accordance with Daud (1989), who stated that the family is a place where love, compassion, decency, and morality are nurtured. This is important because the generation that is psychologically and emotionally stable is the generation that gets adequate love and education from their parents. These qualities are responsible for shaping the personality of the new generation to be more patient, resilient, persevering, loving, and respectful towards each other. The love from her mother caused Dhia to never feel lacking.

The family development that emphasizes love becomes the basis of the formation of society, and the society in turn becomes the basis of a nation. This means that the strength and progress of a country begins with the family and the community. This is crucial because it is the family (household) and society that shape the quality of individuals who become the citizens and leaders of a country. The culture of the nation that includes the value system and way of life (including a loving society and a loving culture), as the vision aspired, needs to be fostered from the beginning, which requires the people to realize the importance of family institutions to develop the country and take the necessary steps to create a family and a caring society (Makhsin, 2007).

In addition, this novel also depicted the love of a friend. This can be seen through the character of Nana who wholeheartedly loves Dhia. Nana is portrayed as a good friend when she tells the teacher about Athirah's betrayal of Dhia. Nana didn't want to see her friend sad. Even though Dhia was born with a disability, the surrounding community loved Dhia, especially Nana. This kind of attitude encourages people with disabilities to live. This can be proven through the quote below.

"Nana loves Dhia. So, she feels responsible to tell the teacher about all this. That's why she did all that. She can't bear to see Dhia sad", said Puan Dalilah.

(*Dhia!*, 2014:89-90)

Self-Esteem Needs

The next level is the need for self-esteem. People want to be appreciated. Accordingly, individuals also need strength, abilities, and status in life. They want to contribute to society. At this stage, Dhia's character wants disabled people who don't have a perfect physique like her to succeed in life. Dhia also wants to win the design competition so that she will no longer

be looked down upon by her classmates who always make fun of her for not having fingers. Dhia's need for self-esteem can be seen through the following quote.

Hearing her name announced as the winner, Dhia could not believe it. She was stunned for a moment before stepping up to the stage to be with her two friends. She seemed to be frozen and unable to move. Perhaps she herself never suspected it.

(Dhia!, 2014:97)

This quote has proven that Dhia's character has received appreciation from the community based on Dhia's ability and determination to create a design for the independence month competition at her school. Dhia's success as a disabled child is extraordinary because Dhia has no fingers and it is difficult for her to do the work to complete the design. Dhia's success in the competition illustrates that Dhia as a disabled child has reached the level of self-esteem.

Self-Actualization Need

Finally, the greatest human effort is to achieve self-actualization. All the previous levels of need should be fulfilled first before a person needs of self-actualization. Therefore, humans try to do their best to survive.

To reach the self-actualization stage, Dhia's physical disability, which is not having fingers, is the main problem that Dhia has to face. However, based on the researcher's reading, Zainun Mustapha has succeeded in portraying Dhia's character perfectly, describing Dhia as a disabled child who has high ambitions to win the competition. This can be seen through the quote below.

"Mom, Dhia doesn't care if I win or not. What's important is that Dhia will complete the project with Dhia's own hands, with a strong spirit, Dhia will fight until it's finished, Mom", Dhia's voice is enthusiastic.

(Dhia!, 2014:13)

Based on the quote, Zainun Mustapha clearly illustrates that Dhia has achieved self-actualization because she did not make her disability an obstacle to achieving success.

Next, the self-actualization stage is illustrated through Dhia's attitude of being independent and not dependent on others. This can be seen through Dhia's sewing skills. Although Dhia has no fingers, she tried to sew a Malaysian flag to be used for the competition organized by her school in conjunction with celebrating the country's independence. This can be seen through the quote below.

"Well, I sewed all this with my own hands. Although my right hand has no fingers, my left hand still works. I can sew like you who have fingers, Nana", said Dhia.

(Dhia! 2014:36)

In other situations, the author describes Dhia's character has cooking skills. This stage was reached by Dhia's character when she was able to prove that people with disabilities like her

also have the ability to do household chores such as cooking. This can be seen through the passage.

"It wasn't me who fried it. Dhia did all this", answered Puan Dalilah while smiling broadly at Dhia, her favorite child.

(Dhia, 2014:68)

However, according to the Islamic perspective, humans do not reach the level of perfection. This is because human beings are weak creatures and only Allah SWT has the quality of perfection.

Conclusion

On the whole, the novel '*Rahsia Dhia!*' by Zainun Mustapha is one of the most important works that display disabled children's character needs. This study has proven that People with Disabilities (OKU) are also entitled to the same rights as other normal people. The presentation of the children's character needs is also expected to open the eyes of the community to be considerate towards the disabled. In analyzing the disabled children's character needs, it is clear that Dhia's character, who represents disabled children, has her own needs and it is based on the Theory of Human Need as suggested by Abraham Maslow.

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